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# Dorset



**GLOUCESTERSHIRE**: is another of the Welsh Border Marches, located just south of Shropshire where another branch, our SHEPHERD ancestors, are believed to have lived prior to taking ownership of Castle John in County Tipperary. Gloucestershire's western Welsh neighbor is Monmouthshire, lying just across the River Wye. The Cotswold Hills, the Forest of Dean and the fertile valley of the Severn River allow the county to have a wide variety of agricultural products. Supporting the cause of Protestants, the county supported the House of York in the War of the Roses, supported the draconian measures taken against the Roman Catholic Church by HENRY VIII in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and CROMWELL'S Parliamentary Army against CHARLES I's Royal Army in the following century.

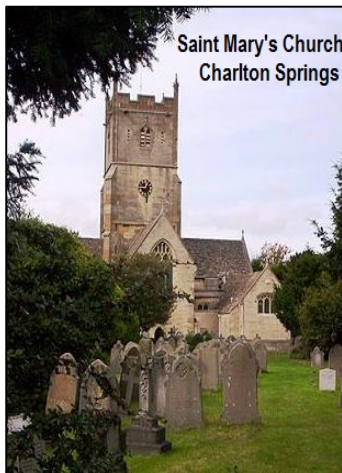
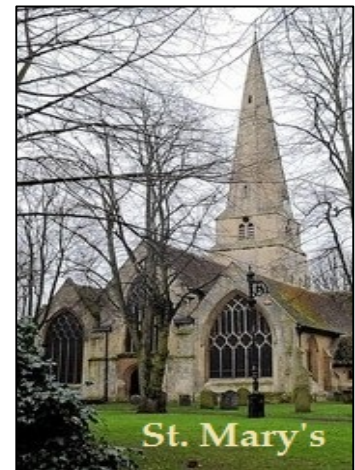


**CHEL TENHAM:** could refer to a *town*, a *borough* or a *manor*. The *town*, on the *River Chelt*, is the result of fusing 3 ancient villages: *ALSTONE*, *ARLE MANOR* and *CHARLTON SPRINGS*. It is one of the 5 major settlements of Gloucestershire and was locally prominent because of its markets and fairs. Particular to the area was wool from the Cotswold sheep which was highly prized for half a millennium – between the 13<sup>th</sup> & 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. Local crops included carrots, cabbages, turnips, oats and barley. The lack of information on the

DORSETT line makes it difficult to pinpoint where they lived.

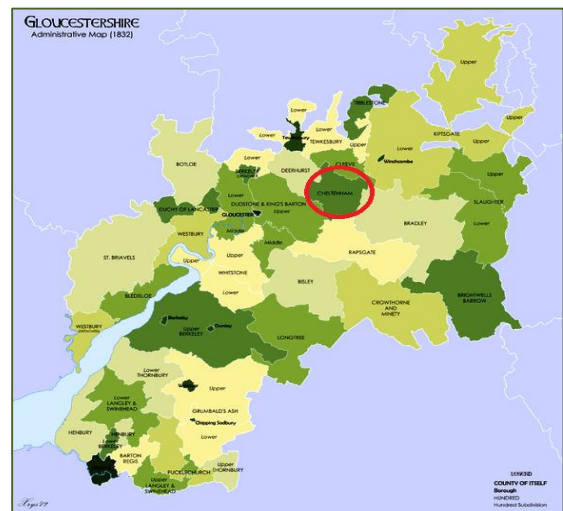
The *Parish Church of Saint Mary* (right; *Cheltenham Minster*, 2013) has been in continuous use for 850 years. The Parish Church of *CHARLTON SPRINGS* was a second *Saint Mary's Church* which was founded in 1190 (below left). Undoubtedly both were familiar sites to our DORSETT ancestors as the town was not overly large.

*CHEL TENHAM BOROUGH* contains just 18 square miles making it the smallest of Gloucestershire's six districts. The *BOROUGH* includes the ancient villages of *SWINDON*, *UP HATHERLY*, *LECKHAMPTON* and *PRESTBURY*. The first and last of these also have ancient churches but a review of the records available online make no mention of any DORSETT which favors the probability they were from the *town*.



For most of post-Conquest history the area has been the property of the king. Feschamp Abbey in Normandy, France is recorded as being granted Cheltenham for an unspecified period and Syon Monastery, then in Islington, Middlesex, was owner until its dissolution in 1539. In 1628 Cheltenham *manor* was bought from the king by SIR JOHN DUTTON, the lord of Sherborne (Gloucester) manor. This information is included, as are the town names above, to assist with future research to be done on our DORSETT ancestors.

*Technically*, the DORSETT ancestor didn't cross the Atlantic, she married a CHEESEMEN and they made the move. I decided to include this family because (1) her brother also moved to the New World and lived in the same area as his sister and (2) I don't have enough information to write a separate book!



## HUSBAND'S NAME:

**JAMES DORSETT**

Born: c1582

Cheltenham, Gloucestershire, England

Married: c1607

*Cheltenham?*

Died:

## WIFE'S NAME:

**MARTHA**

Born: 1588

Died: 1641

## ISSUE:

1. **MARTHA DORSETT** 1608
2. **JAMES DORSETT, JUNIOR** 1609
3. *CORNELIUS DORSETT* *may be son of JAMES DORSETT, JUNIOR*
4. *SAMUEL DORSETT* *may be son of JAMES DORSETT, JUNIOR*

Some researchers have suggested JAMES DORSETT moved to Bermuda, married, and raised his family there. This honest mistake probably originates with the fact that JAMES named his son JAMES and the *son* moved to Bermuda. How could JAMES SENIOR'S daughter MARTHA wind up marrying WILLIAM CHEESEMAN from Chesham in Buckinghamshire?

A second common mistake arises because the spelling of the surname most commonly encountered, *DORSET*, was a mistake. Because of this error, many researchers place the family in *Dorsetshire* on the southwest coast of England rather than Cheltenham in *Gloucestershire*.

JAMES and MARTHA were married in or before 1608 at the latest. To date only 2 children have been found and they have been found only in records of Middletown Township, East New Jersey. It was from a record pertaining to his daughter MARTHA that her father's name was uncovered. This led to his home town in Cheltenham.

Both children grew up in Cheltenham and their daughter MARTHA married and was raising a family before leaving England. The son JAMES was probably a 2<sup>nd</sup> or later son for a couple of reasons. Naming of children followed a pattern at this time in which the first son and daughter were named for grandparents and later children were named after their parents. This assumes that JAMES' own father was not named JAMES but, as the son never used a designation indicating this, such as *Junior* or *III*, there is no reason to believe it was. The laws of inheritance dictated the eldest son inherited the estate; as such the younger sons were the ones that left the area. Unless the father had no estate to inherit, it is likely that the oldest brother of the two known children inherited what was probably a small estate. The heir would usually deed portions of the estate to younger siblings if it was large enough but that does not seem to be the case here. Unfortunately, we don't know if MARTHA was the eldest daughter (and therefore named after a grandmother) or not.

It is unknown when JAMES or MARTHA died and there is no indication they ever left Cheltenham.

ISSUE

He probably had 3 or 4 children by 1610, but only the following two have been identified:

1. **MARTHA DORSETT**: born 1608; married **WILLIAM CHEESEMAN** from Chesham in Buckinghamshire around 1627. Chesham is about 75 miles east of Cheltenham so just how the two met is a mystery. Customarily, the wife would live in the husband's hometown but this is not certain for this couple. Their first child, a daughter named **REBECCA**, was born in 1628 and they had at least 8 more children before 1645, all believed to be born in England. Some state that the family lived in Gravesend on Long Island where MARTHA died in 1644. As the patent for that town was not granted until 1645, and WILLIAM CHEESEMAN is not one of the original patentees, both statements cannot be true. One possibility is that WILLIAM and MARTHA moved to Gravesend around 1650. WILLIAM, but not MARTHA, is recorded in records of Middletown, East New Jersey beginning in 1667. While the wife's name appears in records much less frequently than her husband, it is unusual that MARTHA does not appear at all. On the other hand, the Middletown Baptist Church records, of which WILLIAM was one of the founders, make no mention of any wife of WILLIAM which leaves us guessing as to the specifics of the family. In fact, it very well could be that MARTHA never made it to the New World but lacking records stating this to be the case, the assumption is that she accompanied her husband..
2. **JAMES DORSETT, JUNIOR**: born 1609. A family story has JAMES spending time in Bermuda before relocating to Middletown. Arriving in the islands in his late teens, he married ANN HARRIOT in Southampton parish, Bermuda, on 22 April 1629.<sup>1</sup> They first lived in Warwick parish, east of Southampton on the main island. They owned property in southwest Warwick according to a 1639 deed. (See end of this section for background on Bermuda) JAMES DORSETT travelled to Middletown in 1671 where he witnessed the signing of a lease on 25 March 1671 between BRIDGET HERBERT and EDWARD SMITH of a Middletown property. His married sister MARTHA CHEESEMAN had only arrived in Middletown a few years earlier so perhaps he was visiting her. Appearing in the records of that same year is a quit-claim deed, recorded 6 May 1671, for property in Monmouth County from ANDREW DORSET to JAMES DORSET, JUNIOR and JOSEPH DORSET. JAMES and JOSEPH could be father and son but ANDREW is an unfamiliar name. JAMES was in Middletown from 1676 to 1678 with his wife ANN. On 14 September 1676 he obtained a Warrant for a Survey of up to 240 acres & meadow for him *and his wife* in Middletown. The Survey was completed the following spring and recorded on 12 May 1677; in this record, it is stated the Warrant was dated 20 November 1676.<sup>2</sup> The area surveyed contained 202 acres and there is no other record accounting for the additional 38 acres allowed by the Warrant. The deed of conveyance bears the date 20 July 1677 and this would be the home of DORSETT descendants for several generations. The first payment of rent was due on 25 March 1678 but the GOVERNORS quit rent account book states that as of 15 October 1686 he hasn't been able to pay because *he is poor*.<sup>3</sup> In this era, landowners had to pay quit-rents and taxes for all purchased property despite owning the land. Because of disputes over ownership of the quit-rents between the Governor and the Proprietors, land owners often paid neither, claiming poverty. One writer has stated

*There formerly stood, in the garret of the old Dorsett Mansion, an ancient bedstead with wooden curtains, viz: top, back, head and foot enclosed with paneled work, and sliding doors of the same in front. It had come over with the "first man," and on the cords were spread bare a pelt, the hair having all gone long ago of the skin of a large bear that the immigrant had killed near his*



*dwelling and appropriated the hide for a bed bottom. They were both destroyed at the clearing of the house by the old family in 1839.*<sup>4</sup>

He was a member of the jury for the Shrewsbury Court of Sessions held on the 3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> of September 1678, as he had been at the previous Court held on the 28<sup>th</sup> of March, at the house of FRANCIS BORDEN which definitely places him in East Jersey at that date.<sup>5</sup> JAMES and ANN returned to Warwick, Bermuda in late 1678 or early 1679. In July 1679 JAMES *and his wife* were fined by Bermudian authorities because they were Quakers and ANN was later fined for not attending Anglican services in Warwick. ANN may have died in Bermuda in 1679 or 1680 as nothing further is heard about her in Middletown.

JAMES DORSETT reappears in Middletown records when he served on the jury at the Court of Sessions in Middletown during 1680.<sup>6</sup> On 4 January 1688 he registered his ear mark with JAMES GROVER, Town Clerk for Middletown. He served as one of the Constables for Middletown Township in 1688. STILLWELL'S accuracy is suspect as there are many errors in the section on DORSETT; he attributes the same marriage, or what appears to be one marriage, to different couples such as JAMES' *daughter* MARTHA marrying RICHARD HERBERT and his *granddaughter* MARTHA marrying RICHARD HERBERT. STILLWELL also fails to identify a *Proprietary Grant*, a *Warrant for Survey*, a *Survey* and the *Deed* for a single Dorsett tract of 202 acres; instead he relates *each* as a separate purchase giving JAMES hundreds of acres he never owned! The documents he cites are actually for the *same* property, the 202 acre farm.<sup>7</sup> He may have remarried in Middletown as some sources give his wife's name as ELIZABETH.

The 202 acre farm remained in the family farm for 6 generations. Located near Holmdel, about 3 miles from Matawan, a portion of the 202 acres was set aside for a family burying ground.<sup>8</sup> This is now the *Dorsett Town Historic Cemetery* on Telegraph Hill Road in Holmdel, Monmouth County, NJ. (Not sure where the *Town* comes from). It contains markers that are legible for only 11 DORSETT'S but the burying ground has many more burials.<sup>9</sup> The original farmstead was directly south of the cemetery with the second one being built about 100 yards northeast of it, on the east side of the north-south road past the site of the Old Bethany Meeting House which once stood about a mile away to the north. The last family member to own the farm was ELIZABETH DORSETT, born 1780 (and apparently *married* to a DORSETT), who disposed of the farm in an unspecified manner in 1840. She died in 1879.



On 16 December 1689 he was granted a Warrant for 100 acres in Middletown; on 26 March 1690 the *Survey* was done; one of the records has the notation *entd 7 Oct 1691* appended to it. These 100 acres were adjacent to tracts owned by WIDOW BOWNE and JEREMIAH BENNETT.

It is unclear when JAMES died but the years of 1720 and 1721 often found are decades too late. He probably died in the early 1690s. In a Proprietor's record of 1697 the farm is referred to as *DORSET'S Old Plantation land*.

STILLWELL mentions one son JOSEPH and several unnamed daughters, including one who married a *MR. CHEESEMAN*. STILLWELL confused JAMES'S sister MARTHA, who married WILLIAM CHEESEMAN, with one of his daughters. Their eldest son *was* JOSEPH and there are

indications of at least one more son. One source names 3 children: JAMES (married ELIZABETH; son JAMES), CORNELIUS and SAMUEL, but this is uncertain.<sup>10</sup>

- a. JAMES DORSETT: married ANNE. The JAMES DORSETT who acted as Town Clerk when he registered the ear mark of the actual Town Clerk, WILLIAM LAWRENCE, JUNIOR on 29 December 1712 could have been this JAMES. The attribution of the following children is very speculative.
  - i. RACHEL DORSETT: born 14 April 1703. Married JOSEPH COLLINS.
  - ii. JOHN DORSETT: born 29 September 1708. Married CATHERINE HOFF. An Indenture between JOHN and CATHERINE DORSETT and DANIEL HENDRICKSON of Monmouth was recorded in Middletown on 10 August 1762.<sup>11</sup> JOHN died 29 September 1765; buried *Dorsett Cemetery*. 3 ch.
  - iii. JAMES DORSETT: born 29 December 1710. Married ANNE PEW, daughter OF JOHN PEW AND SUSANNA WHITLOCK. Probably received the 100-acre tract in Middletown. 6 ch.
  - iv. SAMUEL DORSETT: born 16 April 1713. Died 11 September 1741. A bond given by GISBERT VAN BRACKLE and dated 23 February 1743 provides the following information: he is the second husband of RACHEL, widow OF SAMUEL DORSETT. SAMUEL left his widow a legacy with which to care for their daughters. GILBERT is pledging this bond to the executors OF SAMUEL'S estate to properly educate and care for these two daughters:
    1. ELIZABETH DORSETT
    2. MARY DORSETT
  - v. MARTHA DORSETT: born 26 April 1716. Married RICHARD HERBERT.
  - vi. ELIZABETH DORSETT: born 18 October 1719. Died before father.
  - vii. JOSEPH DORSETT: born 16 August 1722. Married MARY VAN DE VENTER. Recorded on 26 March 1737 is the transference of property in Middletown from JOSEPH DORSETT to JAMES DORSETT. This may have been the 100-acre tract purchased by JAMES DORSETT, SENIOR in 1689. The grantee JAMES DORSETT was probably a brother. On 22 June 1780, one JOSEPH DORSETT was named in a letter as one of ten persons whose property was plundered and then carried off by a party of 36 *Queen's Rangers* and 30 *refugee Tories* who had landed the previous day at *Conascung Point* on Raritan Bay in Monmouth County, east of the Raritan River, opposite Staten Island. The patriot forces skirmished with the enemy as they retreated, suffering two fatalities with injuries to *CAPTAIN WALLING*, *LIEUTENANT HENDERSON* and an unnamed private. The enemy claimed to have lost 7 men in the skirmish but the patriot forces believed the number to be higher.<sup>12</sup> The letter is supplemented by information posted by the West Jersey History Project on their website: an enemy party under Tory COLONEL TYE (a mulatto slave named TITUS) plundered the area around Conascung Point.<sup>13</sup> Died 25 December 1770, buried in *Dorsett Cemetery*. Named on same monument as brother JOHN and possibly 2 children: JOSEPH DORSETT, born 7 March 1743, died 10 April 1831 and his wife

HANNAH BURDGE (no dates) and NANCY DORSETT, born 5 July 1739, died 5 December 1758. There are three additional DORSETT's, plus one wife of a DORSETT, all from later generations, named on the monument.<sup>14</sup> It is not possible to draw any definitive conclusions as to the identity of this JOSEPH DORSETT, given the little information known, but is included herein as the subject of this section is the only person with that name that was possibly alive in 1780, being 58 years old. 7 ch.

- b. JOSEPH DORSETT: born c1630. This son seems to have inherited both tracts of land from his father. One source states: "*The first dwelling on the property stood directly south of the burial ground. According to ASHER TAYLOR, JAMES' son JOSEPH appears to have divided the large tract into five parts, "retaining a part in the centre which was laid out as one hundred and forty acres when sold in 1839. The central farm and locality was always called Dorset Town."*<sup>15</sup> The years of birth and death given for this JOSEPH, 1681-1741, by NEWTON are actually for his son or grandson of the same name. No mention is made as to the disposition of the 62 acres contained in the 4 other tracts and no record appears in the East Jersey Proprietors registers.
  - i. JOSEPH DORSETT, *JUNIOR*: The JOSEPH who was born 21 April 1681 was a great-grandson of JAMES and designated as *Junior* in most records is not this JOSEPH but his eponymous son. This may be the JOSEPH DORSETT who signed a Will on 10 September 1741 naming his wife as RACHEL but it seems unlikely since he does not name any children, using the phrase child or children instead. See discussion below.
    1. JOSEPH DORSETT, III: Born 21 April 1681. As stated, this JOSEPH is usually found as *Junior* in records. He registered the ear mark *formerly belonging to* his father JAMES, on 21 June 1734. Married 23 July 1702 ELIZABETH POLING. Acted as executor of the estate of THOMAS MILLIAGE of Freehold Township in 1715.<sup>16</sup> JOHN BOWNE II lived in and had a store at Middletown, where he died circa 1715. His estate was proved 11 April 1716 and the file contains an inventory, probably from 1716, that lists 572 people who owed him money through bonds, mortgages, and store debt. A JOSEPH DORSETT owed an unspecified amount for a bond; it is not certain if this person is the subject herein, but it seems likely.<sup>17</sup> A JOSEPH DORSETT helped to mediate a boundary dispute between JOHANNA SMOCK and DANIEL SEABROOK in Shoal Harbor on 11 February 1739. The probate file at Monmouth County Court contains two last Will and Testaments, one signed on 10 September 1741 naming the wife as RACHEL and the second naming the wife as ELIZABETH signed on 26 September 1741. This second Will addresses the possible death of his son JOHN from his current illness; this was augmented with a Codicil signed on that same date that addressed a similar situation with his son JOSEPH. Named in addition to his widow ELIZABETH in the second Will is a deceased son SAMUEL, six living children RACHEL, JOHN, JAMES, MARTHA,

ELIZABETH, and JOSEPH; and a grandson ANDREW DORSET. In the Codicil he names a granddaughter ELIZABETH, daughter of JOSEPH. The Will signed September 11<sup>th</sup> names JOSEPH'S Widow ELIZABETH and his father JOSEPH, who basically, split the estate between them, with modifying bequests for any *child or children* that may survive him. That JOSEPH'S son JOSEPH was ill on the 26<sup>th</sup>, at first it seems the 10 September Will was his but, since the father names JOSEPH'S daughter as ELIZABETH and the earlier Will does not name any children, opting for the generic *child or children*, it may not be the son's Will. Both Wills name *my good friend* JAMES MOTT and *my son* JOHN DORSET as executors. JOSEPH died 12 October 1741 and his estate was valued at just over £436 in November.<sup>18</sup>

**Bermuda** <http://www.bermuda-online.org/history.htm>

1625 to 1640. An estimated 1,000 or more indentured servants arrived in Virginia each year, some orphans and condemned criminals but mostly the unemployed seeking economic opportunity.

1626. Richard Norwood's second survey divided the island into 50-acre shares of land and was published as a map by John Speed. It showed the unusual shape of Bermuda.

1626. September. St Mary the Virgin Anglican Church in Warwick Parish was constructed. (It celebrated its 390th anniversary in September 2016). The church was started by a group of Warwick farmers who wanted to get together for regular prayer. That first building was likely a wooden hut made of cedar, the present-day stone structure was built by 1830. Since then, the 105-member church has undergone many transitions.

1629. In Bermuda, the population was calculated as 2,500 white and between 300 to 400 black and Native American.

October 1630. Scots exiles were sent to and sold as slaves at the Plymouth Colony in Massachusetts, Berwick in Maine and Bermuda by General Oliver Cromwell following the Battle of Dunbar (Sept 3, 1650). He sent them on the ship 'Unity' with instructions to sell them "into perpetual servitude." There is no known surviving listing in Bermuda of such sales.

1633. Richard Norwood completed a third survey of Bermuda. It was never published but exists in several manuscript copies.

1635. June 10. The ship Truelove left from England with more colonists for Bermuda.

1635. September. The ship Dorset did the same.



1637. Richard Norwood returned to Bermuda as a schoolmaster, bringing his wife and four children. His first school was probably in Devonshire Tribe, but later he built his own school on his estate in Pembroke. This estate is still called Norwood – the house on it today was built about 1711 by the husband (Saltus) of Richard Norwood's great granddaughter, but there are no remains of the school house.

1637. Governor Chaddock arrived and almost immediately had two boats built, one with a giant capstan or crane purpose-built to recover cannon or heavier objects from the many shipwrecks around Bermuda. He salvaged so many on one area of the wreck-strewn reefs to the west of Bermuda that the area became known as the Chaddock Bar.

1673. A hand-colored and copper-engraved map of Bermuda was included in Montanus' *De Unbekante Neue Welt*, and is based on Blaeu's chart of 1635. Blaeu's map is one of the most influential early maps of the island based on the famous 1618 survey by John Norwood of the Bermuda Company. It shows the division of the island into its original "tribes" and lists various landowners in a table below the map. The Roanoke colony is also depicted on the map and mentioned in the title.

1676. Map of Bermuda by John Speed was published

1679. The population of Bermuda totaled 8,000 including slaves, about 1,000 of whom were fit to bear arms.

## Endnotes

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- <sup>1</sup> Vicky Moon "Bermuda Ties" April 20, 2012, GenForum online at: <http://genforum.genealogy.com/stillwell/messages/2306.html>; references Bermuda Colonial Records Vol. III 1676-1689
- <sup>2</sup> Most of the information concerning the East Jersey Proprietary deeds obtained from the New Jersey State Archives, , Early Land Records, 1650 – 1801 database;; available online at <https://wwwnet1.state.nj.us/DOS/Admin/ArchivesDBPortal/EarlyLandRecords.aspx>.
- <sup>3</sup> *op.cit*: Stillwell, Genealogical Miscellany, 2:154, 178, 204, 215, 223, 369, 388, 392, 396 and 414
- <sup>4</sup> Asher Taylor, Dorset History, p. 221. Cited at <http://longislandsurnames.com> "Dorsett" by calandsally@cableone.net
- <sup>5</sup> Monmouth County Deed Books A, B & C (scans of original records) pages 91, 93?
- <sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, page 119.
- <sup>7</sup> *op.cit*: Stillwell, Genealogical Miscellany, Volume 3 (NY: 1914) pp. 426 – 432.
- <sup>8</sup> E Salter "Dorsett Genealogical Record," History of Monmouth and Ocean Counties (Bayonne: Garner & Sons; 1890), p. xxiv.
- <sup>9</sup> <http://www.distantcousin.com/cemetery/nj/monmouth/Dorsett/>
- <sup>10</sup> Long Island Surnames "Family Group Sheet for James Dorsett/Anne Harriot"; "Family Group Sheet for James Dorsett/Elizabeth"; <http://longislandsurnames.com>
- <sup>11</sup> Collections of the Monmouth County Historical Society.
- <sup>12</sup> Unnamed Trenton newspaper (date unknown but soon after the date of the letter); article with the heading *Trenton, June 28, Extract of a Letter from Monmouth county, dated June 22, 1780.*
- <sup>13</sup> West Jersey History Project: David C. Munn, Battles and skirmishes in New Jersey of the American Revolution, "Absecon to Delaware Bay" (1976, Bureau of Geology and Topography, Department of Environmental Protection) ; <http://www.westjerseyhistory.org/books/battlesmunn/partone.shtml>; the site includes a reference to NJA 2, IV, 456-457. (Archives of the State of New Jersey, Second Series, volume IV [Trenton, 1901-1917]).
- <sup>14</sup> Taylor, Dorset History (above)
- <sup>15</sup> Steve Newton, Newton-Hamilton, Rootsweb; <http://wc.rootsweb.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/igm.cgi?op=GET&db=newtonancestry&id=I4157>
- <sup>16</sup> John E. Stillwell, Historical and Genealogical Miscellany Volume VI: Unrecorded Wills and Inventories Monmouth County New Jersey (reprint Shrewsbury Historical Society; 1975) pp.34, 44. Digital copy available through FamilySeach.com.
- <sup>17</sup> Karl Lemons, *John Bowne Will and Debtor List*, accessed 8 December 2017, [https://www.wikitree.com/index.php?title=Space:John\\_Bowne\\_Will\\_and\\_Debtor\\_list.&public=1](https://www.wikitree.com/index.php?title=Space:John_Bowne_Will_and_Debtor_list.&public=1)
- <sup>18</sup> Monmouth County Wills, File \_\_\_\_M, pp. 939 – 947.